

NSC BRIEFING

15 June 1954

UNITED STATES-SOUTH KOREAN RELATIONS ENTERING CRITICAL PERIOD

I. Introduction

- A. The United States is now entering into a critical period in its relations with President Rhee.
1. Rhee will likely exploit failure of Geneva to unify Korea to justify "correctness" of his view that negotiations with Communists are futile.
 2. He has often threatened to renew hostilities following failure at Geneva.
 3. There are several pending military and economic issues likely to bring US-South Korean relations to a new low over next few weeks.

II. The Geneva Conference

- A. Rhee is likely to recall his delegation from Geneva unless US/UN completely and unconditionally terminates talks at early date.
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1. [REDACTED] Rhee desires a clean break "with no left-overs or cold salad gathering mould in the UN icebox."
 2. Anything Rhee interprets as temporizing or appeasement increases possibility of a unilateral ROK walk-out, thus creating major problem in US-ROK relations.
- B. ROK spokesmen have stated repeatedly there will be no more talks on Korea following Geneva.
1. Rhee strongly opposes proposals to refer Korean issue back to UN or to continue discussions among a smaller group of nations.

NSA, State Dept. reviews completed

C. A ROK withdrawal would most likely be timed to coincide with the Chinhae anti-Communist conference, sponsored by the ROK, scheduled for 15-17 June.

1. Rhee might see propaganda advantage in recalling delegation at that time to get conference aims "off with a bang."
2. 17 June also first anniversary of Rhee's prisoner release.
3. He would not be averse to this move even if Allies have agreed to terminate Korean phase and notwithstanding his earlier promises to allow political discussions to run a full 90 days.

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III. The Chinhae Conference

- A. Billed as a "people's conference of Asian nations," this parley of unofficial representatives is being sponsored by the "Anti-Communist People's Front," a paper organization covering Rhee's personal sponsorship.

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1. It is essentially a ROK propaganda forum seeking to attribute broad Asian support to ROK foreign policy objectives.
2. In effect, Rhee is attacking and seeking to reverse US strategy in Western Pacific, concentrated on a strong, friendly Japan economically integrated with SEA countries.
3. Rhee may offer an anti-Communist front of small Asian nations as an alternative to Japan as basis of US position in Western Pacific.
4. The anticipated criticisms of America's Asian policy at Chinhae suggest a Rhee propaganda appeal to US Congressional and public opinion to strengthen the ROK in dealing with US Executive departments.
5. It is believed Rhee will attempt to convince US popular Asian support exists for a collective anti-Communist program.
6. Inherent in this is ROK determination to achieve leadership in any US-supported SEA collective security program.
7. Rhee may feel that basis of US support for ROK derives principally from US-Chinese Communist conflict.
8. He may consider, therefore, that membership in a US-led organization to block Communist pressure in SEA is an ultimate, if indirect, means of ensuring US support in unifying Korea, assuming that in event of war with China, US would be forced to reinforce Korean front.

IV. The Post-Geneva Period

A. The possibility of a northward attack.

1. Rhee will be extremely difficult to deal with once the Geneva conferees concede their failure to unify Korea.

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2. His recent public statements, however, neither add to nor detract from previously held views about his future courses of action.
3. He is convinced that time is running out and that "if fight we must, let us get started as soon as possible."
4. While a recent top-level army reorganization probably provides him with greater command flexibility in case of unilateral action, his top army commanders, except for UCS Chairman General Yi, have flatly told him he cannot hope to unify Korea by unilateral military attack.
5. [REDACTED]
6. It is assumed that previous restrictions on ammo, a 3-6 days' supply remain in effect.
7. Only new indications of possible unilateral action are that Rhee has restricted his top officers to Seoul on a 1-hour availability basis [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
8. Rhee's prime tactic at the moment seems to be the use of threats which, in an 11 June press interview, he called "especially promising" alternative.
9. He seems to be thinking primarily in terms of delivering an "ultimatum" to the Communists to "get out of Korea or we will fight you," on grounds that the Soviet Union does not want war now and "what the Soviet says is law for her minions."
10. Rhee will apparently not be moved from bluff to action unless he can contrive to embroil the US in renewed hostility or unless the US moves to improve relations with Peiping. Period between end of June and [REDACTED] will be critical.

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B. Other action relating to the armistice

1. Rhee's prime hope continues to be that he can embroil the US in some kind of military action by indirect means. (See III 7-8 above).
2. He may seek to provoke the Chinese Communists by:
 - a. seizing Chinese fishermen off the Korean coast;
 - b. continuing to urge the use of ROK troops in Indochina;
 - c. provoking incidents along the truce line;
 - d. building or seeking entry into an Asian defense community which he hopes will become the recipient of US military aid.
3. He may announce that South Korea is no longer bound by the armistice terms.
4. He may withdraw his troops from the UN Command.
5. He has stated he will eject the Communist members of the NNSC from South Korea.

C. South Korean attempts to secure greater US economic-military commitments.

1. Rhee will continue to seek increased US commitments using the tactic of keeping as many issues "boiling" as possible to strengthen his bargaining power.
2. Such issues will include:
 - a. a 35-division ROK army with naval and air supporting units including jets;
 - b. the amendment of the US-ROK mutual defense pact and the conclusion of a status of forces agreement;
 - c. a greater ROK voice in the disbursement of US aid funds;
 - d. retention of the unrealistic 180-1 "permanent" exchange rate;
(this issue is an inflammatory one with Rhee)

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- e. the recall of Economic Coordinator Tyler Wood; and
 - f. the stoppage of American aid purchases for Korean recovery in Japan. (Rhee is pressuring Korean firms from buying in Japan, even where FQA contracts are involved).
3. He will put forth all his old demands, ignoring the fact that he has theoretically bargained away these demands for concessions already granted by the United States.
 4. He will reverse the ordinary negotiating procedure of putting forth the maximum position first, by his usual technique of adding new demands once he has exploited his original position to the maximum.

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